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Islamic Revival in West Africa: Update on Nigeria and Senegal

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An Intelligence Assessment

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May 1985*

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Islamic Revival in West Africa: Update on Nigeria and Senegal

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] of the
Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It
was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. []

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA, on
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**Islamic Revival in West Africa:
Update on Nigeria and Senegal**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 15 May 1985
was used in this report.*

Islam is the fastest growing religion in Sub-Saharan Africa, numbering some 80 million followers in West Africa alone. The Islamic revival has been felt most strongly over the past three years in Nigeria and Senegal. Indeed, in both countries Muslim communities now comprise a majority of the population. In Nigeria, Islamic fundamentalism is gaining strength against the traditionally powerful Sufi brotherhoods in the Muslim community. In Senegal, the traditional brotherhoods themselves have adopted some fundamentalist trappings, and independent fundamentalist associations have increased their recruitment efforts.

The Islamic communities in Nigeria and Senegal have been exposed increasingly during this period to radical and fundamentalist theologies from abroad:

- Iran has emerged as the revival's principal source of inspiration, building networks of sympathizers among Muslim fundamentalist groups, expatriate Lebanese Shiite communities, and university students.
- Libya, buoyed by military successes in Chad, is redoubling its efforts to use Islam as an entree to Nigeria and Senegal. To date, most inroads have been made in Nigeria where northern-based Muslims have proved the most receptive.
- The Saudis continue to provide vital economic assistance to Muslim communities, in part to counter Iranian and Libyan influence.

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In our judgment, the stridency and effectiveness of Muslim proselytizing will make it all the more difficult for West African governments to manage their economic crises and defuse rising levels of public frustration over living conditions and social changes. In 1980, for example, 7,000 members of an outlaw Muslim organization were killed in a violent uprising in Nigeria. Last year, 2,000 deaths occurred in similar violence in the northeastern portion of the country. In recent months, over 100 lives were lost in Gombe as violence flared again.

Moreover, given each group's single-minded belief in its own cause, we expect that tensions between and among fundamentalist and traditional Muslim organizations in Nigeria, for example, will challenge government control despite the regime's attempts to preempt some aspects of Muslim reform and to control religious violence. Although Senegal has intervened

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May 1985

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forcefully to restrict extremist fundamentalist activity, we believe Dakar will find it more difficult—as its economy contracts—to maintain the necessary loyalty of brotherhood leaders whose support is purchased by government patronage.

If recent history is any guide, we can also expect that anti-Western bias will increase as militant followers of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary ideology now in the universities eventually fill positions of influence in the bureaucracies and cabinets that traditionally have been friendly to the West. In the longer term, as numbers of fundamentalists grow, national political leaders will come under pressure to incorporate Islamic institutions into what have so far been secular state structures.

Over time, the growth in Islamic influence will provide opportunities for Iran and Libya to extend their activities in the region. In our estimate, Iranian and Libyan support for terrorism, utilizing Islamic fundamentalist cells and targeting US embassies and diplomats, is likely to develop into a more serious threat than at present.

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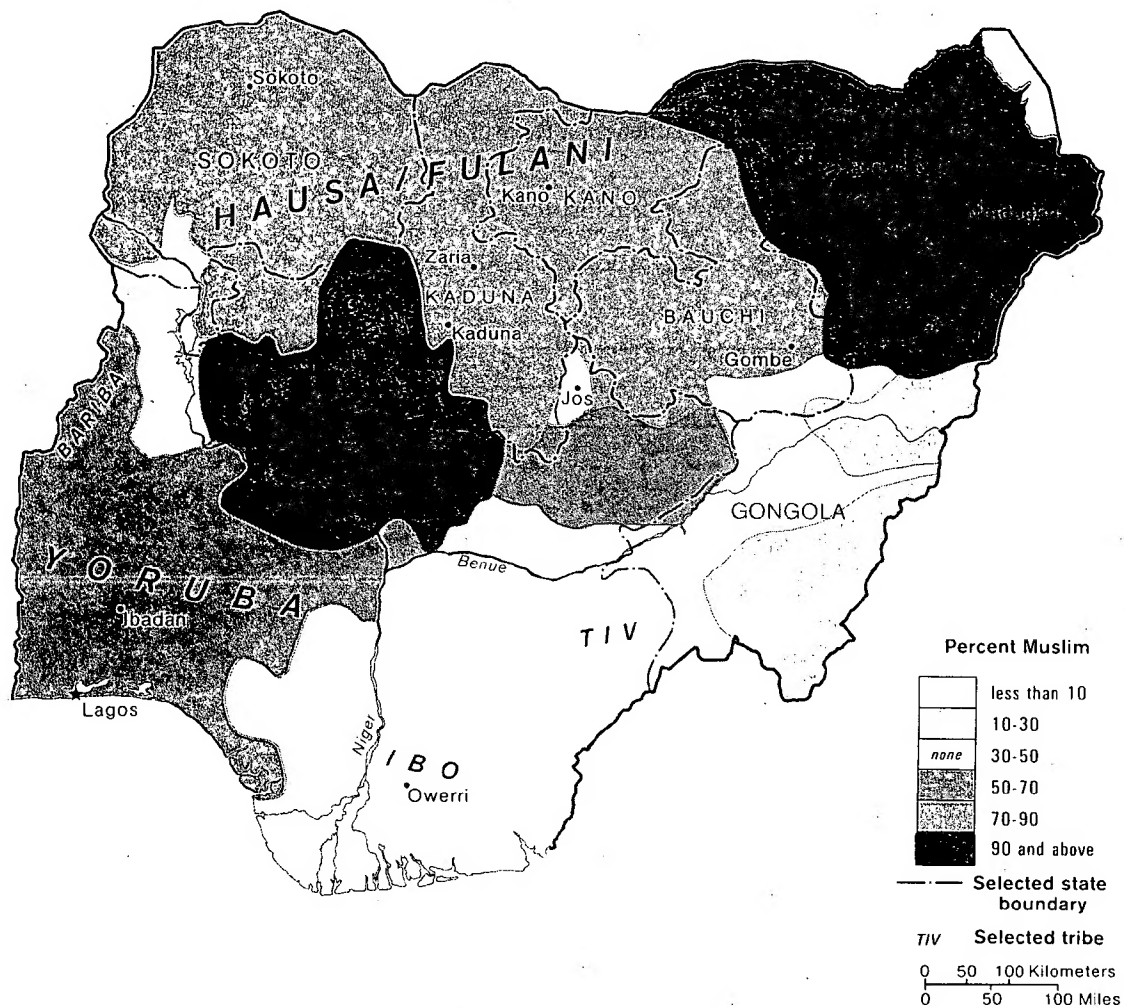
Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
West Africa and the Islamic Revival	1
Nigeria	1
Reaction to the Fundamentalist Revival	3
Senegal	4
Reaction to the Fundamentalist Revival	5
External Influences	6
Iran	7
Libya	7
Saudi Arabia	8
Prospects	9

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Figure 1
NIGERIA: Muslim Distribution



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Islamic Revival in West Africa: Update on Nigeria and Senegal

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West Africa and the Islamic Revival

According to a variety of published sources, Islam is the fastest growing religion in Sub-Saharan Africa and gains new adherents each year at the expense of Christianity and African tribal religions. Muslims in West Africa number some 80 million—out of a total population of some 170 million—and, on the basis of US Embassy and academic sources, we believe they are becoming more receptive to militant forms of Islam. Muslim communities in Nigeria and Senegal now compose the majority of both countries and are in the vanguard of Islamic revival in West Africa.

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On the basis of a review of US Embassy and press reports over the past several years, the Islamic resurgence in West Africa is spread by an effective Muslim missionary effort involving local fundamentalist leaders as well as emissaries of Iran, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. According to our embassies and press reports from West Africa, proponents of Islamic fundamentalism hope ultimately to establish Islamic institutions on a national and regional scale. Embassy reporting suggests that Islamic proselytizers find a receptive audience among many Nigerians and Senegalese alienated by the forces of modernization and rapid urban growth, and disillusioned with entrenched Western-oriented elites who are faulted for corruption and deteriorating living conditions.

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Nigeria

US Embassy reporting indicates that Islamic fundamentalism is growing more rapidly than any other section of the Nigerian Muslim community. Most adherents seek Islamic reform at the expense of the traditional brotherhoods (*darika*), who are characterized by mysticism and a pragmatic mixing of Islamic

and local tribal custom. In their public statements, the fundamentalists espouse easily grasped prescriptions for national renewal and, according to Nigerian press accounts, are drawing thousands of young people away from the brotherhoods. Nevertheless, we believe the fundamentalists have yet to come up with a leader or doctrine that will overcome the ideological divisions within Nigerian Islam and enable them to produce religious or political change on a national scale.

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Among the most politically influential, in the opinion of US Embassy officials, are two separate fundamentalist groups, the Izala and JNI. Both are directed by the same leader—Abubakar Gummi—but serve different purposes: the Izala operates at the local level, while the JNI aims to promote Islam at the national levels of government. According to US Embassy reporting, Abubakar Gummi, a Muslim lawyer and preacher at Kaduna city mosque, has established himself as the intellectual and spiritual leader of Islamic reform in Nigeria, and comes the closest to exercising nationwide leadership within the diverse Nigerian Muslim community. US officials characterize Gummi as an Islamic purist and political moderate who is willing to sacrifice immediate political gains for the sake of Islamic principles. He has alienated many influential supporters, for example, by his outspoken criticism of corruption and the customary, non-Islamic ritual practiced by traditional leaders in northern Nigeria.

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The Izala. The most influential fundamentalist organization at the local level is the *Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'a* (Izala), founded in the 1970s by Gummi's followers. Its religious orientation is Wahabi—the 200-year-old form of Islamic revival that originated in Saudi Arabia—and the group receives substantial financial and moral support from the Saudis, according to US Embassy reports.

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Islam in Nigeria

Nigeria's Islamic community of nearly 50 million embraces over half the population and is one of the larger Muslim communities in the world. Its origins can be traced to a jihad (holy war) in northern Nigeria waged early in the 19th century, which also contributed to the rise of Islam in parts of neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. A militant tradition has continued in Nigeria where Muslims are prone to violent means of settling disputes. []

The majority of Nigeria's Muslims claim membership in one of the principal Sufi brotherhoods, including:

- The Qadiriya to which most northern local traditional leaders and many senior governmental officials belong. It was founded in the 19th century by the jihad leader, Usman dan Fodio, who is still perceived as the source of political and spiritual legitimacy in the northern region. The present Sultan of Sokoto, dan Fodio's titular descendant, is aged and infirm, according to US Embassy reporting, and unable to fulfill his role as the titular leader of all northern Nigerian Muslims. Intense jockeying is under way to succeed the Sultan after his death. The most likely successor, according to US Embassy reporting, is Ibrahim Dasuki, a 62-year-old Oxford-trained businessman born in Sokoto. A high-ranking federal civil servant in the 1960s, he is now secretary general of the Jama'at al Nasril Islam, holds a traditional office in Sokoto, and is well known and respected in northern political circles and Lagos. Since Nigeria's last military coup in 1983, Dasuki has been the northern-Muslim-dominated government's chief intermediary with northern civilian elites and has direct

access to Head of State Buhari and other senior regime officials. []

- The Tijaniya was established in Kano city by Islamic missionaries from Senegal early in this century. The sect is holding its own as the largest and most aggressive of the Nigerian brotherhoods, []

Thousands of Tijani make their way weekly to a small town near Kano for Friday prayers led by the elderly ex-Emir of Kano. The Tijani have drawn on the considerable financial resources of the wealthy Kano merchant class to create a paramilitary group known as the Army of God (Jundul-Lahi), made up of young men among the urban unemployed, according to US Embassy sources. The Army of God last December threatened to burn down the Kaduna state radio station that broadcasts fundamentalist preaching, according to US Embassy reports. []

- The Ansar al Islam predominates among Yoruba tribesmen living in southwestern Nigeria, nearly 40 percent of whom are Muslim, although ethnic and sectarian differences separate them from northern coreligionists. The Ansar al Islam, led by educated southern elites, is the recognized representative of southern Muslims. The Buhari regime's Chief of Staff and second-ranking official, Tunde Idiagbon, is a Muslim Yoruba who regularly prays with an Ansar al Islam group in Lagos. Nevertheless, US Embassy reporting indicates that the Ansar's leadership has begun to criticize Nigeria's northern-dominated military government, reflecting festering discontents that now prevail in southern states over the favor shown northern interests and senior-level corruption. []

The Izala is the fastest growing Islamic group in Nigeria, according to US Embassy sources. Once an obscure sect, it has begun to be featured prominently in Nigerian press and academic publications over the past few years, and its meetings are said by Nigerian press observers to attract thousands of participants. According to Nigerian press accounts, the group is intensely involved in proselytizing members of other Muslim groups and nonbelievers. Late last year, US

Embassy reporting indicated that the Izala organized a large meeting in Kano city that the Kano state military governor agreed to attend before the rally was canceled for security reasons. In the view of US Government officials, by trying to involve a state government figure, the Izala sought to claim official sanction for its challenge to the Tijaniya brotherhood in the latter's stronghold. []

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The JNI. While Izala has developed a base of grassroots support in northern Nigeria, another fundamentalist organization, the *Jama'atul Nasril Islam* (JNI), which also is heavily backed by Saudi Arabia, has tried to gain influence from within the government, the media, and centers of economic power, according to US Embassy sources. Nigerian press reporting indicates that the JNI was established by Abubakar Gummi in 1962 and that the group has both religious and political objectives. According to Nigerian press accounts, the JNI draws its membership from northern elites and speaks through the semiofficial regional newspaper, the *New Nigerian*, and the regional radio station in Kaduna. The US Embassy reports that the brotherhoods claim Gummi is using the organization to seek national political power under the cloak of Islam. Gummi's influence within the government gives some merit to that claim—Head of State Buhari sent him on several important missions abroad after the 1983 coup, including Nigeria's first mission to Saudi Arabia. []

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Accounts of JNI activities in the Nigerian press indicate that the group has close ties with influential northern Nigerian political and commercial leaders. We, and the US Embassy, believe that JNI's underlying goal is to bring all Islamic activity in the country under the control of a small group of northern religious leaders, senior civil servants, and businessmen led by Gummi. The Nigerian press reports that the JNI directs the annual pilgrimage, the hajj, to Mecca of some 20,000 Nigerians. []

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Islamic fundamentalism is spreading rapidly on school and university campuses in northern Nigeria, according to US Embassy reporting. Many students express disapproval of the Westernized culture of Nigeria's ruling elites and idealize the values of village life and purified forms of Muslim asceticism. Embassy reporting indicates that members of the Muslim Student Association, most prominently at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and Bayero University in Kano, publicly espouse the most radical fundamentalist theology in Nigeria, and have staged demonstrations to extoll Iran's revolution and to demand a purge of Nigeria's political and religious leadership. Islamic student radicals have attacked police and members of conservative Islamic groups and have created tensions between Christians and Muslims both on campuses and in surrounding communities, according to Nigerian press accounts. []

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Many Muslim students seek ties with fundamentalist groups outside the universities—particularly the Izala—according to US Embassy sources, who estimate that nearly one-third of northern Nigeria's Muslim students now belong to the Izala. These sources also indicate that a student-Izala nexus could provide a flashpoint for civil unrest in the north in the future. []

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Reaction to the Fundamentalist Revival

The brotherhoods have reacted violently to the erosion of their influence at both the leadership and grassroots levels because of the growing fundamentalist revival. Vigilante groups of young militants from the brotherhoods have attacked fundamentalist mosques and Abubakar Gummi's house in Kaduna, according to US Embassy reports. Nigerian press reporting indicates that hostility to their common enemy has made the Tijaniya and Qadiriya brotherhoods draw closer together, playing down differences of ritual and practice that caused bloody infighting between them during the 1970s and early 1980s. []

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For its part, the government has reacted to the fundamentalist revival by closer association with the brotherhoods and by occasionally attaching Islamic ideals to government policies. The government has used the Islamic brotherhoods, particularly the conservative Qadiriya, to rally support for its policies and to control northern populations during the past year, according to US Embassy reporting. In addition, the Nigerian press indicates that the regime has sought to associate its campaign against corruption, the so-called War Against Indiscipline, with Islamic reformist ideals in an effort to rally support at mass meetings on northern university campuses and among fundamentalist groups. []

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The brotherhoods and the government are not the only Nigerian groups affected by the rise in fundamentalism. The revival has nurtured the growth of an outlaw organization of heretical Muslims called the Followers of Maitatsine Marwa. The group, which the Nigerian press reports has caused thousands of deaths in several incidents of major violence that have required Nigerian Army intervention to suppress, is

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banned by the government and is universally condemned by other Muslims. According to its adherents, the Maitatsine criticize the corruption and ostentation of Nigeria's elites and the effects of Western technology and education on Nigerian society. They offer their disciples an austere lifestyle and a xenophobic theology that incorporates unorthodox magical ritual and local custom. Some members publicly equate the founder, Maitatsine Marwa—a fugitive Muslim preacher from Cameroon—with the Prophet, which is anathema to mainstream Muslims. []

Based on their stated beliefs and goals, the Maitatsine appeal to foreign migrants in Nigeria who are young, rootless, and unemployed. We believe many Maitatsine left Nigeria during Lagos's mass expulsion of foreign Africans in 1983. The Buhari government recently ordered thousands more illegal West African immigrants to leave by mid-May, which will further reduce Maitatsine strength. []

Maitatsine leader Marwa, and an estimated 7,000 of his followers, were killed during the Kano uprising in 1980. Last year, a rampage by Maitatsine members in Gongola state in northeastern Nigeria caused some 2,000 deaths, according to Nigerian press accounts. This year, an outbreak of rioting at Gombe, in northeastern Bauchi state, took over 100 lives but was quickly suppressed by police and Army troops. The Nigerian press claims that Maitatsine cells have reappeared in virtually every major city in the north, as well as Lagos and other coastal cities. Originally, US Embassy reporting estimated the group's membership at around 10,000. By now, with so many killed and the group outlawed in 1980 and forced underground, we believe it has broken up into largely independent cells whose members number for the most part in the hundreds. []

Senegal

Radical Islamic revival has been slower to develop and spread in Senegal and has taken different forms than in Nigeria. The US Embassy reports that the Senegalese Muslim community is highly organized and continues to be dominated by the traditional Sufi brotherhoods. Until recently, according to the Embassy, the principal brotherhoods—the Muridiya and

Tijaniya—have been able to exclude the fundamentalist revival from Senegal because of the tight hold they maintain over their followers. Within the last two years, however, academic sources indicate that small, politically radical, fundamentalist groups are appearing in Dakar. Backed by Iran and Libya, an extremist group of fundamentalists within the Tijaniya has established a cultural center in Dakar and publishes several journals. []

Principal figures are Sidy Lamine Niasse, his brother Ahmed—the self-styled “Ayatollah of Kaolack,” and ‘Abd al-Mun’in al-Zayn, the leader of the Lebanese Shiite community in Dakar. Their followers include students and teachers at the University of Dakar and civil servants who resent the brotherhoods' economic conservatism, according to academic sources. []

According to US Embassy reporting, the brotherhoods still dominate the daily lives of the majority of Senegal's Muslims. In addition to offering their members devotional activity, the brotherhoods organize agricultural production and marketing, provide access to political patronage and financial credit, and represent their members to state authorities. So far, the fundamentalists, lacking the size and organizational capabilities of the brotherhoods, cannot begin to deliver equal services. []

Recently, however, the fundamentalists' revival has begun to affect the mainstream leadership of the brotherhoods themselves. According to academic observers, the Muride leader Lahat Mbake, for example, has begun to incorporate aspects of the fundamentalist revival into the brotherhood's religious observances, requiring his followers to purify their practices and enforce prohibitions on alcohol and tobacco. Mbake is building a university devoted to Arabic studies at Touba, the Muride's principal city. Scholarly sources report that Muride students at the university and secondary schools in Senegal's principal towns have formed an association for the purification of Islam along fundamentalist lines. The aggressiveness with which the Murides proselytize provokes resentment among other religious groups, according to academic sources. []

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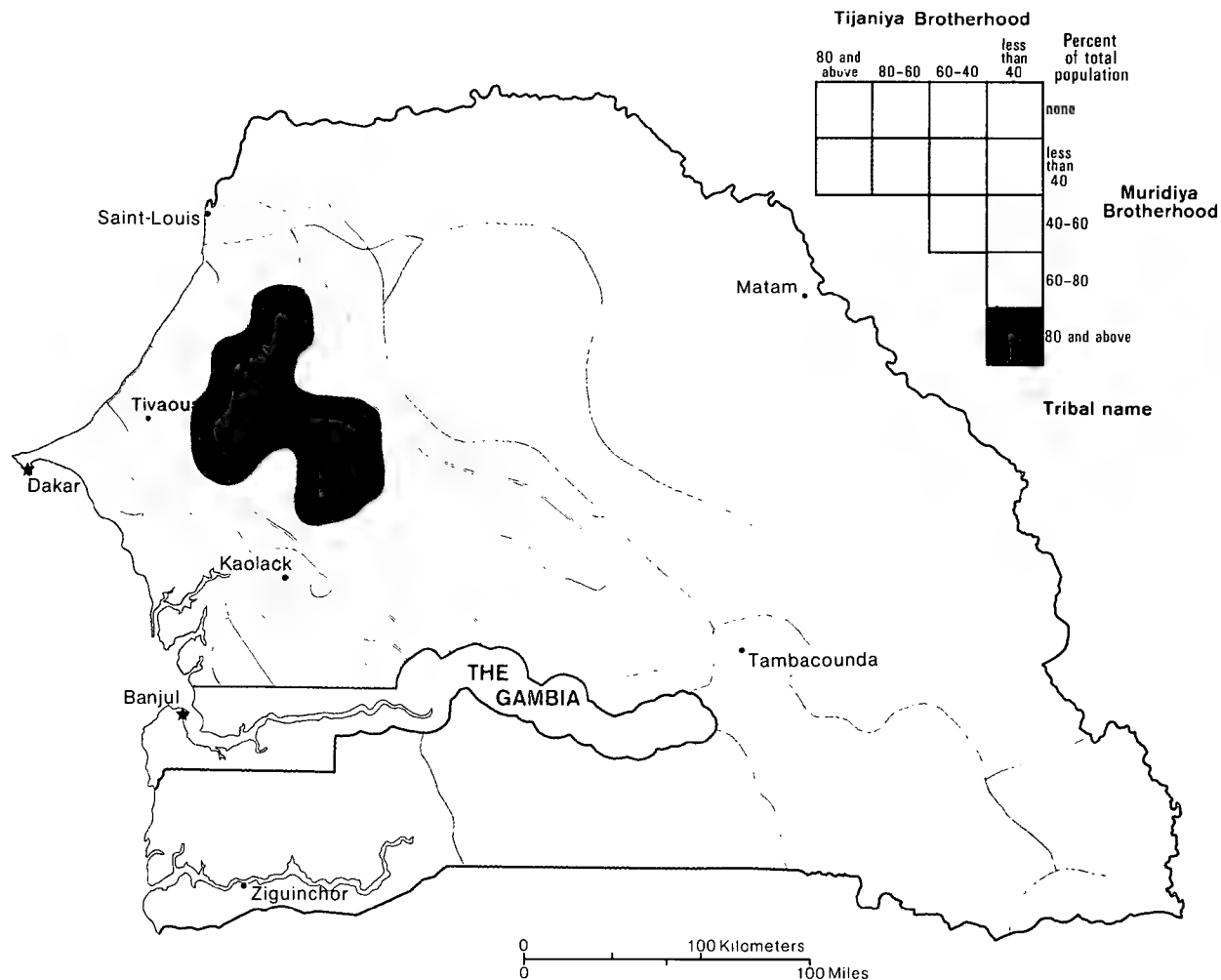
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Figure 2
SENEGAL: Distribution of Muslim Brotherhoods



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Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

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Reaction to the Fundamentalist Revival

President Diouf—an adherent of the traditional Tijaniya—has tried to restrict both extremist Tijaniya splinter groups and Muride militants, according to US Embassy reports. He has imprisoned both the Niasse brothers for subversion and personally warned the large community of Lebanese Shiites in Senegal that ties with Iran and Libya will not be tolerated. He also has tried to restrain Muride aggressiveness,

meeting frequently with the brotherhood's leaders, according to US Embassy and press reporting. Nevertheless, in our view, greater religious activism and competition between Senegal's Muslim groups pose a growing threat to Senegal's fragile political order as the government seeks to impose an economic austerity

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Islam in Senegal

According to US Embassy reports, Senegal—with Muslims comprising over 80 percent of the 6.8 million population—has the most highly organized Islamic community in West Africa. Senegalese Islam is dominated by the traditional Islamic brotherhoods. The two largest and most important sects, the Muridiya and the Tijaniya, grew out of successive movements for Islamic reform during the last century when Muslim religious teachers (marabouts) assumed the authority exercised by traditional tribal leaders.

The Muridiya has attracted, by a narrow margin, a majority of the Islamic population and has built up a formidable financial empire in Senegal based on the commercialization of the peanut trade and a shrewd investment of the brotherhood's communal assets, according to US Embassy reports. Its members come mainly from the peasantry, but US Embassy sources report that university students and young intellectuals are now joining the brotherhood, as a rebellious gesture both against modernization and their parents' Tijani affiliations.

The US Embassy indicates that the Muridiya has undertaken an active political role in Senegal, under the leadership of Lahat Mbake who claims to speak

for the Murides' estimated 1.5 million adherents and monopolizes relations between the government and the brotherhood. Embassy sources report that he is consulted by the Senegalese Government on most issues of internal policy and that he has blocked agricultural reform because he views social and institutional change as a threat to the special privileges Muride leaders receive from their peasant followers. To protect smuggling of peanuts across the border with The Gambia, which pays higher producer prices for this cash crop, Mbake has tried to prevent unification under the nascent Senegambia confederation that would jeopardize this lucrative operation.

Until recently the Tijaniya was the largest Islamic group in Senegal, with membership estimated at about 1.3 million, according to US Embassy reporting. The brotherhood's traditions emphasize meditation and religious orthodoxy. Like the Muridiya, it has attracted a cross section of the population—from rural herders and small shopkeepers to university professors and government officials. President Diouf is a Tijani. The Tijaniya is divided into three, virtually independent subgroups, and is less aggressive than the Muridiya, exercising a moderating influence in Senegal.

program that has brought its popularity to an alltime low. As the Senegalese economy contracts, we believe Diouf will find it more difficult to control intergroup conflicts and maintain the loyalty of brotherhood leaders whose support is both necessary and dependent on government patronage. US Embassy reporting suggests that divisions between Muslim groups have sharpened during the past few years as militant fundamentalists have sought a following, and as the memberships of the Muridiya and Tijaniya have reached a rough parity. We believe intergroup violence becomes increasingly likely, particularly in Dakar where the brotherhoods' capacity to mobilize the population for strikes or rioting could threaten the central government itself.

External Influences

We believe that competition for influence among the Muslim communities of West Africa between Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Iran has intensified the exposure to fundamentalist theologies. In our judgment, Iran has emerged as the Islamic revival's principal source of inspiration in the region. Moreover, we note that Libya—buoyed by its success late last year in getting France to withdraw militarily from Chad—has redoubled its efforts to establish the Islamic Call Society—in practice a subversive, intelligence-gathering organization—and rename their diplomatic missions in West Africa "Peoples' Bureaus."

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Nevertheless, the Iranians and Libyans confront important barriers that slow and frustrate their efforts. According to US Embassy reporting, still-powerful traditional Muslim leaders and conservative government officials in both Nigeria and Senegal are hostile to outside radical influences and seek to limit inroads by the Iranians and Libyans. Moreover, we assume both countries realize that Western and moderate Arab governments, which are important sources of aid and investment for Nigeria and Senegal, vigorously oppose the adoption of Iran's and Libya's fundamentalist theology. []

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Iran

We believe that longstanding rivalry between the Saudis and Libyans for influence in Nigerian and Senegalese Islamic communities has been partially superseded over the past three years by an increasingly active Iranian presence.² []

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[] Tehran appears to have assigned a high priority to carrying its brand of Islamic fundamentalism to both Nigeria and Senegal because of their large Muslim populations and regional influence. In our judgment, the increase in Iranian activity reflects Tehran's determination to spread its revolutionary ideology and enhance its international influence. []

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During this period, the Iranians have built networks of sympathizers in Nigeria and Senegal among Muslim fundamentalist groups, expatriate Lebanese Shiite communities, and university students. US Embassy sources in northern Nigeria report that Iranian delegations and embassy personnel are recruiting candidates for military and religious training in Iran and introducing propaganda at universities. []

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[] the Iranians plan to establish a cultural center in northern Nigeria that would give them direct access to the local Muslim community. In Senegal, []

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[] the Iranians have developed a small, but active, group of sympathizers among members of the Niassene branch of the Tijani Islamic brotherhood, among students and teachers at the University of Dakar, and within the Lebanese Muslim community

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in the capital. Tehran has given generous amounts of financial support to Senegalese Muslim brotherhoods and, according to the Senegalese press, has brought a number of brotherhood members to Iran to meet with Ayatollah Khomeini and visit the Iran-Iraq battlefield. []

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Dakar has reacted to these Iranian inroads. Early this year the Senegalese Government shut down the Iranian Embassy in Dakar because of alleged subversive activity, according to the Senegalese press. Since then, sources in the Muslim community report that Iranian activity has receded somewhat. Nevertheless, several Iranian-sponsored publications continue to appear and []

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Tehran's Islamic Cultural and Social Institute in Dakar still functions. []

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Libya

Libya has become much more active in West Africa over the last three years after having been diplomatically isolated and on the defensive following widespread African condemnation of its invasion of Chad in 1980 and its drive a year later to rename its embassies in West Africa "Peoples' Bureaus."³ In Nigeria, the Islamic Trust, a northern-based Muslim association that has channeled funds from Saudi Arabia for welfare needs, is negotiating with the Libyans for aid in excess of \$1 million to support projects within the Muslim community, []

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[] The group is led by members of the northern elite, including former government officials and the present Minister of Commerce. Furthermore, []

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General Buhari's northern Muslim-based military government has acceded to a Libyan request to open an Islamic religious studies center in Kano. The city, in the heart of Nigeria's predominantly Muslim north and the site in recent years of frequent doctrinal disputes and

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³ Although Libyan Peoples' Bureaus are accredited as diplomatic missions, with full rights of immunity, their avowed purpose is to bypass host governments and deal directly with "the people." As the Bureaus have no formal organizational structure, no one is officially accountable for the group's actions, and, without defined roles, members find it easier to operate outside the boundaries of customary diplomatic activity. []

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25X1 clashes between rival Islamic sects, has a long-established community of Libyan traders. The center, [] will be headed by a former Libyan Ambassador to Nigeria who has close family and political ties with the Kano Muslim community. We believe the center will offer Tripoli opportunities to exploit local Islamic rivalries, develop contacts with Islamic student radicals, and assist Chadian dissidents in northeastern Nigeria opposed to Chadian President Habre. []

25X1 In our view, Nigeria is willing to gamble on an expanded Libyan presence in the north, perhaps in part because Buhari is being pushed by radical elements in the Muslim community to develop ties with the Libyan Government. We believe Lagos also may hope that Tripoli will breathe life into an agreement signed last year that calls for the establishment of a joint bank and holding company, thereby providing Nigeria with much needed financial aid. []

25X1 For its part, Senegal has kept Libya at arm's length. The US Embassy reports that Tripoli is pushing Senegal to accept some form of renewed official representation after having successfully convinced The Gambia—Dakar's reluctant partner in the nascent Senegambia confederation—to accept a Libyan presence last March. Senegal and The Gambia both broke relations with Libya in 1980, charging Tripoli with fomenting subversion. Unable to exploit any official connections, Tripoli continued to provide financial support to Senegal's small Niassene Islamic fundamentalist movement, according to US Embassy sources, and has established ties with the Murides. []

25X1 The Gambia, a weak ministate enclosed within Senegalese territory, is particularly vulnerable to Libyan activity, in our view. Although the Gambian Government recently turned down Tripoli's request to open a Peoples' Bureau in Banjul, it accepted a Libyan-staffed Islamic Call Society office that will serve Tripoli as a liaison with religious organizations, according to US Embassy sources. The Libyan-sponsored Islamic Call Society has grown out of a mandate by the Organization of Islamic States in 1970 to promote Islam through peaceful means. Libyan leader Qadhafi uses the society to support subversion and intelligence activities, according to US Embassy sources in North Africa. The US Embassy in

Dakar reports that the location of such a Libyan base of operations in Banjul is worrisome to the Senegalese, who suspect it will be used to step up funding and support for radical Islamic fundamentalists in Senegal. We note, however, that Senegal still maintains troops in The Gambia—introduced to suppress a coup attempt by radicals in 1981—which should enhance Dakar's ability to keep close watch on Libyan activities. []

Saudi Arabia

US Embassy reporting indicates that the Saudis now regard Iran as a greater threat than Libya to their interests in West Africa. We have no evidence, however, that Riyadh plans to step up its activities to counter either Iran or Libya. Instead, the Saudis appear to be continuing support at previous levels to both the moderate Muslim-based governments and to politically conservative Islamic groups in Nigeria and Senegal. []

Despite budgetary constraints caused by the soft oil market, press reports indicate that the Saudis continue to provide vital financial assistance to Senegal, including \$86 million last year, that helps Dakar comply with its tough IMF program of economic adjustment and recovery. In addition, the Saudis provide the Muslim community with scholarships to universities in Mecca and Medina, and sponsor Tijani mosques and Koranic schools throughout the country, according to Senegalese press reports. Furthermore, the Saudis assist financially many of the more than 3,000 Senegalese pilgrims making the hajj to Mecca each year, according to the Senegalese press. []

The situation with respect to Nigeria, however, is not as friendly. Relations between Riyadh and Lagos are strained, according to US Embassy reporting, because of Lagos's recent recognition of Western Sahara's Polisario Front and its refusal to abide by OPEC production guidelines. The Embassy reports that Riyadh nonetheless continues to support Nigerian Islamic organizations such as the JNI and the Izala—whose leadership is sympathetic to the regime and to Saudi foreign policies. The JNI works particularly closely with Riyadh in organizing the annual hajj to Mecca, according to the Nigerian press. []

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Prospects

In our judgment, more radical forms of Islam will find fertile ground in the poor economic conditions likely to pertain in West Africa over the next several years. While economic recession per se is not necessarily destabilizing, the impact of government austerity measures on important political groups—such as the Muslim communities—will give wider scope for political instability in countries beset by such problems as corruption, mismanagement, and ethnic and religious cleavages. We believe that the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, with its simplistic promises of economic and political recovery, will increase the appeal of radical ideologies, particularly in Nigeria and Senegal, if Western-oriented leadership elites fail to stem deteriorating living conditions. []

The Islamic revival will provide greater opportunities for Iran and Libya to extend their activities in the region. In our estimate, Iranian- and Libyan-supported terrorism, utilizing Islamic fundamentalist cells and targeting US Embassies and diplomats, is likely to develop into a more serious threat than it is now. Moreover, as Islamic radicals in West Africa acquire international contacts and expertise, they will be able to advance their interests by initiating clandestine activities with expert Iranian and Libyan support.

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Economic conditions are not the only catalyst for a fundamentalist revival. As in the Middle East, we expect fundamentalist Muslims to rail against West African governments for following essentially a Western-style modernization path, which they view as religiously and socially decadent. The fundamentalists' intense commitment to proselytization will likely result in increased violence on the local and regional levels. As other, more traditional, Islamic groups shrink in size and as fundamentalist numbers rise, we believe national leaders will come under increasing pressure over the next few years to incorporate Islamic institutions, such as Islamic courts, into secular political structures. Eventually, in our view, support for the transformation of Nigeria and Senegal into Islamic states—which is the militants' announced ultimate goal—will grow as the number of fundamentalist Muslims increase. []

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From the perspective of foreign relations, we believe Islamic radicals are likely to regard their countries' political, economic, and military dealings with the West as unwholesome. The Islamic revival is usually characterized by antimodern and anti-Western thinking, although only the fringes go as far as the extremes adopted by Iranian and Libyan sympathizers. The probability of growing anti-Western bias will increase as militant followers of Khomeini's revolutionary ideology now in the universities eventually fill positions of influence in bureaucracies and cabinets that traditionally have been friendly to the West.

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